



April 9, 2003

West Nile Virus Newsletter

Welcome to West Nile Virus Newsletter

This is the first edition of a regular Department of Health (DOH) communication tool. This electronic newsletter will be provided routinely, throughout the summer to keep our partners informed about West Nile virus (WNV) in Washington State. In this first edition, we would like to review the things that have been accomplished to date.

Threat Level

In November 2002, DOH produced a Mosquito-borne Disease Response Plan (the Brown Book). The plan lays out a response system based on certain sentinel events and potential risk to humans. Currently, we have no indication of virus infection in the bird population, no illness of horses or people, and the risk category is “0” right now in 2003. Our main focus is in preparing to conduct surveillance activities and getting public education material out. If you would like a copy of the Mosquito-borne Disease Response Plan, contact us through the contact list at the end of this newsletter.

Public Information and Education

Training has been provided on the WNV as a zoonotic disease, and methods for controlling mosquitoes. Training in mosquito surveillance has also been developed. If you have a need for training in any of these areas, contact us.

A number of public education materials have also been produced, many in English and Spanish, for distribution in your community. There is also a bill stuffer you can include with other materials going out to your community. A toll-free number (1-866-78VIRUS) that has basic information on WNV in both English and Spanish is now available.

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Web Page

A valuable resource is the WNV Web page; www.doh.wa.gov/wnv. This page will be updated throughout the summer. It contains more technical material than the general public education efforts noted above. It also maintains important links to other agencies and sites that allow you to research certain issues or questions deeper and more thoroughly. As information on dead birds, confirmed cases in birds, horses or people, is received, the Web site will be updated to provide a statewide overview, along with county specific information. You are strongly encouraged to use this site and refer the public or media to the site for information and assistance.

It is hoped that these products and efforts will assist you in dealing with public concerns and assist you as you respond to this emerging disease.

NPDES Permit Update

Many local government agencies have the ability to control mosquitoes, but lack the necessary permits. DOH has applied for a general permit from the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to satisfy the requirements of National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). Securing this permit allows the legal application of pesticides to certain waters of the state, provided certain conditions and procedures are followed. This permit was sought so that we could extend it to local governments and other state agencies that may wish to engage in control efforts.

This is still a work in progress, but here is the latest on the process of acquiring the blanket NPDES permit. In our discussions with some of you, we agreed that based on your unique situations, a boilerplate approach probably wouldn't work. So we have maintained sufficient flexibility to allow various levels of participation by local entities. Recognizing some health districts may prefer to be the permit holder and have other agencies work under their direction - some may want to serve as the "clearing house" and play a coordinating role to assist others to obtain their own permit and consolidate where possible. We are preparing ourselves to deal with either scenario or any reasonable alternative that might emerge. We are asking you to do what you can with what you have.

How will it work? In cooperation with Ecology we are preparing an on-line application site that will be up and running on or about April 15. You will be provided with exact instructions prior to that date. This will allow people to fill out the form, print a copy, sign, and send to us for approval. We currently have no way to accept electronic signatures so a hard copy will be necessary. Our general permit won't be valid until April 25, so while we can't send out any approvals prior to that date, we can begin processing those we receive early and issue them soon after April 25. The big variable for processing time is volume of applications, and how accurately they are completed. We expect a 7-10 day turn around time if most of our assumptions are correct.

A couple of housekeeping issues and some general information based on frequently asked questions:

- Calls are coming in directly from county public works and cities. If you're not already doing so (but many of you are), could you please keep folks in your respective local health jurisdictions (LHJs) informed. The more contact points we have to administer to the slower the process will be for everyone.
- The NPDES & Best Management Practices (BMP's) are available at Ecology's Web site http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/pesticides/final_pesticide_permits/mosquito/mosquito_index.html. If you can't access it, we can send you a hard copy. It's important to have a good working knowledge of these documents to understand the general requirements, and the need for solid Integrated Pest Management (IPM) work.
- There is **NO** fee for a permit – it has already been paid.
- Another update around **April 14** with Web site access information and last minute instructions.

This is going to require some careful coordination, and we will be relying on the local health community for support and coordination. We will be providing training to you soon on the application process, and the importance of IPM approaches. We hope that a system in which the LHJs act as a local clearinghouse for interested applicants will provide you with knowledge and some control of who is applying larvicides in your community, as well as establish a leadership role for you in your community on WNV response.

Technical Tips

The article in Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) describes the importance of dead bird surveillance in predicting human cases of WNV, at Center for Disease Control and Prevention Web site <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol9no4/02-0421.html>.

Abstract: An analysis of 2001 and 2002 West Nile virus (WNV) surveillance data shows that counties that report WNV-infected dead birds early in the transmission season are more likely to report subsequent WNV disease cases in humans than are counties that do not report early WNV-infected dead birds.

Training Updates

The Departments of Health and Ecology will host training for local health staff who will be coordinating the NPDES permits in their jurisdictions. This training is free and no advanced registration is required.

April 16, 9am to 11am, Ecology Headquarters and Southwest Regional Office, Olympia.

April 16, 1pm to 3pm, Ecology Northwest Regional Office, Bellevue.

April 17, 9am to 11am, Ecology Eastern Region Office, Spokane.

April 17, 2pm to 4pm, Ecology Central Region Office, Yakima.

For additional training information contact Kathleen Emmett, Ecology, at (360) 407-6478, or kemm461@ccy.wa.gov; or contact John Daly, DOH, at (360) 236-3305 or john.daly@doh.wa.gov.

Community Comments

Let us hear your comments on this newsletter, your needs, or things you would like to see, by sending them to Maryanne Guichard, (360) 236-3391 or maryanne.guichard@doh.wa.gov.

DOH Contact List for West Nile Virus

General Public Toll-Free Hotline 1-866VIRUS

Publications: Brochures/Response Plan/Fact Sheets

Laura Harper, (360) 236-3380, or laura.harper@doh.wa.gov.

Surveillance: Mosquito trapping, bird surveillance

Tom Gibbs, (360) 236-3060, or tom.gibbs@doh.wa.gov.

Surveillance: Horses, case reporting, laboratory assistance

Dr. John Grendon, (360) 236-3362, or john.grendon@doh.wa.gov.

NPDES: Training, technical assistance

John Daly, (360) 236-3305, or john.daly@doh.wa.gov.

Ben Hamilton, (360) 236-3364, or ben.hamilton@doh.wa.gov.

Clinical: Human case reporting, diagnosis, laboratory confirmation

Dr. Jo Hofmann, (206) 361-2831, (877) 539-4344, or jo.hofmann@doh.wa.gov.

Assistance with news releases and media response

Donn Moyer, (360) 236-4076, or donn.moyer@doh.wa.gov.

Tim Church, (360) 236-4077, or tim.church@doh.wa.gov.

WNV Program Management

Maryanne Guichard, (360) 236-3391, or maryanne.guichard@doh.wa.gov.

DOH Senior Lead/Newsletter Editor

Bill White, (360) 236-3050, or bill.white@doh.wa.gov.

To subscribe to this newsletter

Jill Christensen at (360) 236-3000 or jill.christensen@doh.wa.gov.